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1961/11/06

As valuable and necessary as I consider these two additional US contributions to be, and without them I think there is likely to be a collapse of morale and/or a military coup d'état here, I am not sure that these commitments, coupled with other actions undertaken and planned, will be sufficient for the long run. I would expect the Communists to react by increasing the tempo and strength of their campaign within SVN, by heavier infiltrations into central Viet-Nam and perhaps also in the delta, thus attempting to discredit US military presence here. In final analysis, in order to win we may have to force Communist side to conclude that further attempt to take this country by introduction of force from outside will be met direct US action against North Viet-Nam. I think the steps recommended by General Taylor are necessary now, but I wanted you to have my private and personal assessment as you consider them.

Nolting

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217. Notes by the Secretary of Defense (McNamara) [1]

Washington, November 6, 1961.

Views of Chiefs—11/6/61

1. 8000 should be considered part of a larger increment to come later if that proves necessary.

2. The 8000 men will probably not be sufficient to preserve independence of SVN.

3. Action in SVN should be considered part of action SE Asia.

4. Further mil. aid to SVN should be accompanied by agreement with Diem of action he will take.

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[1] Source: Washington National Records Center, RG 330, McNamara Files: FRC 71 A 3470, SE Asia 1961. Handwritten by McNamara. The source text does not indicate whether the views of the Joint Chiefs were communicated orally or in writing, but they may have been given to McNamara by Lemnitzer at a luncheon meeting which, according to Lemnitzer's journal, took place in the Secretary of Defense's dining room at 1 p.m. on November 6. (National Defense University, Lemnitzer Papers, L–419–71)

Prior to the meeting between McNamara and the Joint Chiefs, the following telephone conversation took place between McNamara and Rusk at 10:53 a.m.:

"M said he understands tomorrow at 5 they are to meet with the Pres on the Taylor report. The Sec said he is seeing T at 2:45 today. M wants a meeting between the two appoints with the Sec and Lemnitzer. They have doubts about the approach recommended and he hopes to thrash this out with the JCS today. The Sec said he would stop by there about 6." (Department of State, Rusk Files: Lot 72 D 192, Telephone Calls)

5. Further US mil. aid to SE Asia will not lead to use of nuclear weapons by USSR.

6. Further US aid to SVN should be accompanied by notice to NVN that action will be taken against it unless stop support of Viet Cong.

7. If further US aid is not provided to SVN it will fall & following it: SE Asia.

8. It is not necessary now to call tact . . . additional res. or gd. force . . . . [2]

[2] The last sentence is illegible. The ellipses are the editor's.

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218. Memorandum of a Conversation, The White House, Washington, November 7, 1961, 10–10:32 a.m.[1]

PARTICIPANTS

The President
Secretary of State
Ambassador J.K. Galbraith, U.S. Ambassador to India
Mr. Walt Rostow, Special Assistant to the President
Assistant Secretary of State Phillips Talbot

Prime Minister Nehru
Foreign Secretary Desai
Ambassador B.K. Nehru, Indian Ambassador to U.S.

[Here follows discussion of the Berlin situation and Soviet foreign policy.]

Turning to another subject, the President acknowledged the importance India places in its geographic situation in relation to its foreign policy. He also recalled that the United States had been neutralist for a long time. Nevertheless he wanted to say that we would like India to oppose us on issues when we were wrong and to support us on those occasions when we might be right. The Prime Minister welcomed the opportunity afforded by this comment to explain the Indian approach to international issues. Indians naturally seek to act on the merit of each matter, the Prime Minister said, but

[1] Source: Department of State, Conference Files: Lot 65 D 366, CF 1990. Secret. Drafted by Talbot and approved in the Office of the Secretary on November 26 and in the White House on December 4. (Kennedy Library, JFK Appointment Books) For Galbraith's account of the conversation, see *Ambassador's Journal*, p. 248.